Ministry of Agriculture

Farm & Food Report

Communications Branch, Walter Scott Building
3085 Albert Street, Regina, Canada, S4S 0B1

Saskatchewan

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Please note: Due to declining readership, the Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture will discontinue the Farm and Food Report next month. The last report will be issued the week of June 23, 2008. Saskatchewan Agriculture would like to thank you for your interest and participation over the past years. For information on Saskatchewan Agriculture's programs, services and events, please visit www.agriculture.gov.sk.ca.

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Log Number: 08-24-104
Week of June 9, 2008

CONFERENCE UNITES GROWERS WITH CHEFS AND BUYERS

Regina-area diners may soon have the opportunity to sample more local fare, with the Farmer-Chef Connections Conference and Workshop coming to the city on June 22.

The event will bring together both the producers and the buyers who have an interest in promoting local food.

"The fundamental idea of the conference is to provide opportunities to local food suppliers and producers to interact directly with wholesale buyers, to establish better business relationships and understand what the needs are from both sides, and to see if there is an opportunity to do some business together," said organizer Tim Ouellette of Tourism Saskatchewan.

Although demand for local food is growing, the concept of local food promotion is not new. There have been many smaller activities around the local food scene for many years, according to Ouellette. As well, the movement has been gaining momentum internationally.

"There are North American initiatives around trying to get local producers connected with chefs. We thought it was timely to try it out here," Oullette said.

The conference will feature two keynote speakers. C.J. Katz from *Savour Life* magazine and the Wheatland Café will present in the morning. The guest speaker at lunch is Michael Stadlander, an internationally-recognized Canadian chef.

"Michael Stadlander has been promoting the use of local foods for many years now in Ontario," Ouellette noted. "He is a well-known name in the food community, well-known to the chefs – a very passionate individual when it comes to this movement."

Stadlander's Eigensinn Farm in Ontario is considered to be one of the world's top dining establishments. His presence at the conference is sure to be a draw for the culinary community.

While the morning session of the conference contains an educational component, focusing on issues surrounding buying and selling local food, the afternoon is about networking. "The afternoon session will primarily be a trade show with networking opportunities for chefs and buyers to talk directly with the producers and see what opportunities there might be for them to work together," said Ouellette.

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The first Farmer-Chef Connections Conference was held in Saskatoon in February. The event exceeded organizers' expectations – registration approached 100 participants, rather than the 60 that were anticipated.

In response, the organizers scheduled a similar event for Regina to build on that success. By early registration counts, it appears that this event will be even bigger.

Not only was the Saskatoon conference well-attended, participants enjoyed the opportunity. "By all reports, the opportunity to network was the most successful component of the conference," said Ouellette. "Other aspects were very well received, too, but all the evaluations mention the opportunity to work at increasing their business and accessing local food products as the most important component."

The Farmer-Chef Connections Conference will promote the use of local food in restaurants and businesses across Saskatchewan. Demand is growing, according to Ouellette, and marketing is increasing in importance.

"It's an interesting phenomenon. There's a lot of current activity at a sub-horizon level around local foods, and I think it's on the cusp of becoming something quite big."

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EVENT SHOWCASES ORCHARDS AND EQUIPMENT

Fruit growing enthusiasts will have the opportunity to learn the finer details of production management at the Saskatchewan Fruit Growers Association Summer Tour and Field Day on June 21.

The event includes two tours and a special lunch at the Berry Barn in Saskatoon.

Education is the key focus of the function. Participants can expect to see an orchard in production. They will also learn about production techniques and managing an orchard.

The day kicks off at Peter Rhodes' Raspberry Ranch just outside of Saskatoon. "At Rhodes' Raspberry Ranch, we're going to see 10 acres of raspberries, as well as an acre of black currants," said Executive Director Charon Blakley. "He's got new plantings of blackberries and grapes there, too."

Also of interest is the specialized equipment Rhodes uses to manage his orchards. The equipment includes a tractor, a rotor tiller, mowers, a skid steer and a golf-cart sprayer.

After lunch, participants will visit the Petrofka Bridge Orchard, owned by Mike and Anne Noel in Waldheim. The Noels boast 12 acres of apples and two acres of cherries, plums and raspberries.

Not only do the Noels operate an orchard, but they also produce apple cider. Participants will have the opportunity to view the specialized equipment used for making the juices.

Equipment is an important focus for the event. "To actually be able to see it is much better than reading about it in a textbook," said Blakley.

The Summer Tour and Field Day is an annual event that takes fruit producers to a variety of locations around Saskatchewan. Last year, participants went to east central Saskatchewan, where they visited Pat and Jeanette Meerholzs' Fatikaki Farms in Preeceville, and Prairie Dome Strawberries just south of Yorkton which is owned by the Vermette family and Kirk Flaman.

Blakley expects that registration, which will be capped at 60 participants, will fill up quickly with members of the Saskatchewan Fruit Growers Association, but stresses that non-members are welcome to attend, as well. "The event is open to anyone with an interest in fruit production," she said.

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The day is ideal for those looking to start an orchard. "Anyone who is interested in planting an orchard will learn how to set it up in terms of distance between rows, between plants – that type of thing," said Blakley.

Those interested in participating in the Summer Tour and Field Day should pre-register. The registration form is available at the Saskatchewan Fruit Growers Association website at http://www.saskfruit.com/.

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CHANGING WEATHER PATTERNS SIGNIFICANT TO CATTLE OPERATIONS

Research involving hydrology, or the natural movement of water within and over the earth, has produced some important results for Saskatchewan cattle operations.

The study, undertaken by the Department of Agriculture and Bioresource Engineering at the University of Saskatchewan, received funding from the Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture's Agriculture Development Fund (ADF), the Beef Development Fund and the Horned Cattle Trust Fund.

"What we were looking at is, where does the water go?" said Dr. Charles Maule, a professor at the U of S specializing in soil hydrology who was involved in the project. "On a feedlot, there is water that's caused by precipitation, such as rain and snow, and there's water that's excreted by the animals themselves.

"We were partitioning that water into the amount that runs off, evaporates and percolates below the feedlot. We focused primarily on the amount that runs off, given certain sizes of rainstorms."

Proper containment of feedlot runoff is important to prevent the infiltration of pollutants into land or water systems where it can cause harm. Large cattle operations, such as feedlots, often have storage ponds that collect runoff from corrals and pens where the animals are kept. The water that ends up in the ponds is commonly used to irrigate fields, allowing for a broader distribution that more readily enables its harmless absorption into the soil to assist in crop development, as well as evaporation.

The goal of this particular research was to develop a beef feedlot runoff model, incorporating regional climate and soil conditions that would aid in determining the proper sizing of runoff storage systems for feedlot operations.

The study ran over four to five years, involving a number of feedlots in different areas of the province. Not surprisingly, Maule noted that the research conditions varied considerably by region and the precipitation patterns for the year in question.

"We were in some areas that were bone dry. The only water that we got in the runoff storage ponds beside the feedlot was from snow melt," he stated. "There were other times in which we had a wet fall followed by a heavy snow pack, making for very wet spring conditions. In some areas, we also hit a couple of wet summers where we had some very intensive rain storms."

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Maule says that two main conclusions were drawn from the research work. The first finding reinforces the importance of proper grading of the cattle pens to enable runoff waters to flow from them. "There can't be a buildup along the edges of the pens. Sometimes when the pens are cleaned, materials are left behind along the fence line that blocks liquids from exiting," he noted.

The second finding relates to the appropriate sizing of storage ponds. Maule says that storage ponds are commonly sized for a 75-millimetre runoff event, which will accommodate a one-in-25-year, 24-hour rainstorm in most regions of the province.

However, changing weather and precipitation patterns are beginning to suggest that certain areas of Saskatchewan may need to consider even larger runoff storage ponds.

"For wetter parts of the province, primarily the southeastern corner and along the eastern edge, their drainage ponds are going to have to be sized for perhaps a larger event than those in the central or the western side of the province," Maule noted.

He says the research is very relevant to producers in a province that is conducive for the cattle industry. "We have good conditions for feedlots, in terms of weather and accommodating runoff," Maule stated.

"However, we might have to consider what type of extreme events we're now going to start getting, as opposed to what we got over the last 30 to 40 years."

A copy of the ADF project *Hydrology of Prairie Cattle Feeding Operations*, #20010292, can be obtained by phoning the Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture at (306) 787-5929. It is also available on the ministry's website at http://www.agriculture.gov.sk.ca/ under the "Research" link.

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ENERGY AND INNOVATION HIGHLIGHTED AT FARM PROGRESS SHOW

In its 31st year, the Western Canada Farm Progress Show continues to expand, celebrating the best practices and innovations in the agricultural industry.

With agriculture experiencing an upswing on a global scale, Rob O'Connor, the event's manager, says there's a sense of optimism in the air again. "The general atmosphere is so positive. In the last 12 months, agriculture has really become a booming economy."

The 2008 edition of Farm Progress Show takes place June 18 to 20 in Regina.

With the event expanding to attract a more diverse audience, there are a number of initiatives that will help move it into the future, such as a renewable energy trade fair called the Energy Centre.

"Renewable energy has become an issue that will affect the future of agriculture," O'Connor said. "Besides being a source for solar and wind power, agricultural land will be used to grow and harvest the crops, which are essential for ethanol and bio-diesel energy production."

The Energy Centre will host educational seminars and trade displays that explore the positive impact that renewable energy sources will have on agricultural practices.

A popular part of the Farm Progress Show is the New Inventions Showcase, which will feature the unveiling of 40 new agriculturally-focused products. With the industry thriving, O'Connor is expecting increased consumer confidence.

"We'll see more farmers prepared to invest in their equipment, upgrading and improving what they already have," he stated. This is good news for the innovators in the Showcase, as well as the hundreds of exhibitors taking part in the event.

According to O'Connor, the Farm Progress Show is about the business of farming, which is international in scope. Thirty-five countries will be represented by 400 international buyers at this year's show.

The event hosts an International Business Centre (IBC), providing a meeting place for international business delegates and registered exporters. With office services and quiet spaces for conducting business, the IBC will have knowledgeable officials on hand to provide expert advice on all aspects of international trade.

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Last year, the Farm Progress Show decided to focus greater attention on an important component of the farm business demographic – women. "There is an increase in the number of women who are decision-makers in farming enterprises," O'Connor noted.

The Heartland Women's Expo will return again this year, showcasing relevant exhibitors, the farmers' market and wine competitions. Each day at 1:00 p.m. in the Women's Expo, Joan McCusker, member of the Sandra Schmirler curling team and CBC Sports curling commentator, will present a new motivational seminar for attendees.

Another personality who will provide six new seminars over the course of the three-day show is horse-whisperer John Lyons. Known as "America's most trusted horseman," Lyons has changed the horse industry with his natural leadership qualities and his ability to inspire and teach. As a highly sought trainer, clinician, teacher and horseman in the industry, Lyon's teaching methods have influenced every breed at every level of performance.

Of all the enhancements to the Farm Progress Show, one of the biggest changes is the addition of the Livestock Management Program. Added in response to producer demand and feedback from the event's exhibitors and attendees in the past, the purpose of the program is to provide education about animal handling and production techniques for today's new livestock economy.

The program will focus on livestock handling demonstrations, beef cattle displays and alpaca displays, and will include both the Canadian Western National Boer Goat Show and the Canadian Western National Dairy Goat Show as part of its proceedings.

Located at IPSCO Place in Regina, the Western Canada Farm Progress Show will run from Wednesday, June 18 to Friday, June 20, 2008. Daily admission is $12 per person.

Attendance to the show increased 8.5 per cent in 2007 over 2006, with a total of 43,000 attendees. With all the new additions and enhancements, 2008 is sure to be even bigger.

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AGRICULTURE COUNCIL OF SASKATCHEWAN HOLDS AGM

Leaders of the agricultural industry will meet in Regina on June 20 as the Agriculture Council of Saskatchewan Inc. (ACS) holds its Annual General Meeting in conjunction with Western Canada Farm Progress Show.

Because of the timing and location of the event, the Council expects a high level of participation, ranging from 60 to 80 people representing ACS's 40 member organizations, as well as Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and the Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture.

"Many of our members are going to be there to go over the past year's business and to give us direction for the future," said Communications Manager Dallas Carpenter.

Direction may come from new sources in the coming year. "We have five of eight director positions up for election this year, so we will see some new faces on the board," said Carpenter.

He credits ACS members and their knowledge of the industry for providing guidance and contributing to the organization's leadership. "They're able to point us in the direction that enables our programs to provide the most benefit to Saskatchewan producers and the industry as a whole."

One of the main attractions of the Council's AGM is a mini-tradeshow. "We're having an industry showcase, which will feature a few of our member organizations, as well as a few of our project proponents who have received funding through the ACAAFS (Advancing Canadian Agriculture and Agri-Food Saskatchewan) program," said Carpenter.

"We have a few MPs, MLAs, and other officials attending the showcase as well, so we're hoping for a good turnout and an exciting event for all."

The administration of the ACAAFS program is an important function of ACS as it works toward its mission of providing leadership and programming to advance the agriculture and agri-food sector, and contributing to a healthy Saskatchewan community.

Other important offerings delivered through ACS include the Biofuels Opportunities for Producers Initiative. The Council also provides programs such as the Saskatchewan Agri-Food Value Chain Initiative, assisting producers and processors in establishing and growing their value chains.

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The ACS Annual General Meeting is an event by invitation only. For highlights of the event, consult the ACS website at http://www.agcouncil.ca/ for news releases and articles.

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